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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined African-American teachers' career aspirations, particularly their perceptions of administrative leadership positions, are presented in this paper. Data were collected through interviews with and surveys mailed to a total of 26 African-American teachers who had participated in the Minority Teacher Recruitment Project (MTRP). Findings indicate that respondents were very interested in school administration as a career option and would consider participating in a school administration program. Most of the teachers had not been considered for recruitment and selection for preparation programs by their school districts or universities. Services offered through the MTRP are identified, which could be valuable for programs attempting to recruit African-American teachers into school administration. The significant shortage of African-American teachers will limit the number of potential African-American administrators. Failure to recognize and encourage such teachers to consider school administration will have serious implications for school districts across the country as they experience cultural, ethnic, and racial student population shifts. (Contains 16 references.) (LMI)

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Minorities in Educational Administration: Issues and
Recommendations

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Abstract

Face-to-face interviews and questionnaires were used to examine the career aspirations of 26 African American teachers who were former participants in the Minority Teacher Recruitment Project (MTRP). Results from the interviews and questionnaires indicate that these African Americans were very interested in school administration as a career option and would consider participation in a school administration preparation program. The results also revealed that most of these teachers had not been considered for recruitment and selection for administration preparation programs by their school district or the university. Additional findings identified services, offered through the MTRP, which could be valuable for programs attempting to recruit African American teachers into school administration. The significant shortage of African American teachers will impact the number of African American school administrators. Failure to recognize and encourage African American teachers to consider school administration will have serious implications for school districts across this nation as they experience shifts in the cultural, ethnic and racial make-up of the student population.

Minority teachers have only to look at past practice of school districts in the appointment of African Americans to leadership positions to feel a sense of hopelessness in the pursuit of leadership positions in school administration. A study by Leonard & Papa-Lewis (1987) reports that race and gender are the major conditions inhibiting minority groups from access to educational administration. According to Moody (1983), the number of African American administrators nationwide reflects a serious problem of underrepresentation.

To accentuate the problem is a more recent report from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, Teacher Education Enrollment Survey (1990). The survey showed only 6.8% of the 493,686 students enrolled in teacher education preparation programs are African American. The declining African American representation of teachers in public schools is alarming. Of all the U.S. teachers, only 5% are expected to come from minority groups by the turn of the century, down from 10% in 1987 (Consortium for Minorities in Teaching Careers, 1992).

Accessing educational administration begins with possession of teaching credentials and teaching experience. Considering the low number of African American teachers, it is obvious that the pool of potential African American school administrators will be inadequate. The Education Research Service reported that 15% of all public school principalships were held by minorities in 1987-88. A 1992 publication by the American Association of School Administrators

reveal a 8.0% representation of minority men in the principalship, 6.4% minority women, 20.6% women (this figure may include counting minority females twice).

This report also found 8.6% minority men, 3.3% minority women and 17.4% women were in the role of assistant superintendent. And for the superintendency, 3.4% minority men, 0.4% minority women and 4.6 women held the highest post of educational leadership. To impact these numbers in the future, increasing the number of African Americans entering and completing teacher education programs and working as teachers is a first step. An examination of the formal and informal barriers and plans to eliminate these barriers is just as important.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR AFRICAN AMERICANS

Accessibility to educational administration relates to having the knowledge of the opportunity and belief that there is a possibility to advance to the position. Knowledge of the opportunity has a lot to do with learning about educational administration as a career option and then knowing what skills are needed to take advantage of the opportunity. The second phase of accessibility requires one to believe it is possible to advance to such a position after acquiring the necessary skills and experiences. History has shown African Americans and other minorities who have knowledge of the opportunities, possession of the skills and experiences, that meeting these criteria does not equate necessarily with advancement into educational administration for them.

African Americans face attitudinal and institutional barriers which have restricted their access to educational administration.

This study focused on African American teachers who have participated in a minority teacher recruitment program. Attempts were made to address several key issues relative to their knowledge of educational administration programs. Such issues as:

- Efforts of the school district to make African American teachers aware of administration preparation programs.
- Essential elements of a minority administrator recruitment program and career aspirations of African American teachers.

Comparisons and suggestions are made between the program services provided by the minority teacher programs in which they participated and services they see as important for someone interested in pursuing school administration.

METHODS

A list of former participants in a minority teacher recruitment project was used for this study. Interviews were conducted with individuals identified as the first participants of the project, which began in 1985-86 school year. A survey was sent to the remaining individuals on the list.

SUBJECTS

Of the 55 questionnaires mailed, 10 were returned with no forwarding address and 17 were returned completed. Another nine individuals were interviewed. The sample for this study consisted of 26 African American, 19 females and 7 males. Of the 26 participants, 23 were teachers, one counselor, one instructor II level and one librarian. Eleven of the educators worked at the elementary level, 9 were in high school settings and 6 were middle school

Arnez (1982) opined lack of commitment to equity and the "good old boy system" of promotion as profoundly affecting the level of African American inclusion into administration preparation programs. Valverde (1980), cited in Leonard, Papa-Lewis (1987), discusses the sponsor-protege (mentoring) system as a major barrier to the administrative hierarchy for African Americans. Individuals selected as proteges are usually similar to their sponsor in many ways. Therefore, schools with predominantly white administrators perpetuate the selection of proteges that fit the white male norm which exist within the school system. African Americans face formidable attitudinal barriers when pursuing leadership positions in a school system. A U.S. Department of Education Resource Manual, "Strengthening Support & Recruitment of Women & Minorities to Position in Education Administration, listed several attitudinal issues minorities and women must be prepared to address. Lack of peer acceptance, subject to subtle or overt acts of racism and sexism, subordinates challenging their authority, limits being place on their decision-making responsibility subject to higher performance level requirements and lack of role models, mentors or sponsors.

Moody (1983) observed that "sponsored mobility" does influence ascendancy to the educational administration hierarchy. Through sponsored mobility an individual deemed knowledgeable or powerful provides entree' to the final steps: interview and selection. Moody further indicates that African Americans learn about networks later in their careers and have less access to both formal and informal influence and communication systems that lead to administration. Access to graduate programs, sponsorship and

selection to administration positions for African Americans seems to be an uphill climb with very little assistance. Other factors cited by Leonard & Papa-Lewis (1987) that affect access to administration for minorities include: lack of confidence and initiative, negative perception of advancement opportunities, lack of models/sponsors, racial and gender stereotypes and constraints by self and family.

Roberts (1992) revealed in his study that access to graduate level study in educational leadership by African Americans is not of major or genuine interest to the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) member institutions. His study concludes that African American student enrollment and program completion rates at these institutions were extremely low and continue to diminish. The prevailing attitudes, reported by Roberts, of these institutions was of non-interest or unconcern about the presence or absence of African Americans in their educational leadership programs. In spite of the dismal picture painted by the above researchers, intervention by universities and boards of education can be a significant step to increasing the opportunities for African Americans in educational administration.

South Carolina recognized the shortage of minority candidates for school administration positions and established the Minority Administration Program (MAP) which maintains a pool of skilled minority prospects (Thompson, 1992). Through recruitment, selection, professional development, counselling and referral activities, minority teachers became qualified and available to fill administrative vacancies. The MAP program reports that minority

educators interested in administrative careers were previously receiving discouraging signals. Before MAP, applicants commented that their districts did not appoint or encourage minorities to pursue leadership positions.

The goal of the Urban Superintendent Program (USP), at Harvard University is to increase the number of women and people of color in school leadership (Peterkin, R. & Keppel, F., 1992). Recognition of this issue at Harvard has resulted in the establishment of other administration preparation programs for minorities across the nation. Peterkin and Keppel (1992) describe the joint efforts of the Institute for Education Leadership, the Joint Center for Political and Economical Studies and the McKenzie Group which have formed Superintendents Prepared-a leadership development program for urban superintendents.

A smattering of programs that address the shortage of African American teachers and administrators suggest concern by many groups for this issues. The Leadership in Educational Administration Development (LEAD) has several current recruitment programs in several states, (Idaho, Kansas, Michigan and Minnesota to name a few). Many of these efforts are informational workshops, seminars, and conferences. The Lyman T. Johnson Fellows Leadership Development program, an effort by the Jefferson County (Kentucky) Public Schools and the University of Louisville, was established in 1989. Candidates for the program are selected and participate in several activities for one year which prepares them for leadership positions.

educators. Their participation with the minority teacher recruitment program ranged from one semester to three years. Most, 12 out of 26, had participated for 2 years with one participating one semester. Eight participated one year, and 4 had been in the program three years.

INSTRUMENTATION

Face-to-face interviews were conducted at the convenience of the teacher. The interview instrument consisted of 34 items grouped into three sections. The questionnaire consisted of 28 items also grouped into three sections. The first section of each instrument centered on demographic characteristics like gender, present position and length of time with the minority teacher recruitment project. The next section examined their experiences with the program, and the last section elicited information about their career aspirations.

RESULTS

Items from section two reflected the experiences the teachers had with the minority teacher recruitment program. Specifically, they were asked how they learned about the program. Word-of-mouth and personal contact by the program staff were the most frequent responses. Word-of-mouth and personal contact were identified 26 times. Seeing an advertisement about the program was checked twice.

They were asked to describe the frequency of their contact with the staff once they were in the program. Participants could choose from a list that ranged from none to very frequent contact. Ten individuals checked very little contact, twelve selected frequent contact and four selected very frequent contact. All the participants

had contact with the minority teacher recruitment staff. They were then asked to select the reasons for contacting the program staff. Once again, teachers could select any of the items on a list. Advising and career counseling were the most frequently selected items. Advising was selected 19 times and career counseling, etc., was selected 20 times. Orientation was selected 6 times, test preparation was selected four times with tutoring and academic help each selected two times. Financial information was selected 8 times. Five of the teachers interviewed selected "social" as a reason for contacting program staff.

The last section of inquiry addressed career aspirations. Twenty two of the 26 teachers in this study indicated that they were interested in educational administration. Four teachers indicated no interest in school administration. Being a principal was selected by 11 individuals, 7 aspired to counselor, one selected superintendent as a career goal and 2 aspired to a supervisor position. When asked if they had ever been approached by anyone in their district about school administration, 22 said no and 4 said yes, they had been approached. A clear majority, 23 of 26 were not aware of a administration preparation program in their district, 3 were somewhat aware, but only 2 of the 3 could name a program. Only one of the 26 had actually participated in an administrator preparation program sponsored by the school district. Twenty-two of these African American teachers reported that they would like to know about educational administration programs and would probably participate. When asked if they had been involved on

school or district committees, 24 had been involved in committees and some reported that they had also been the chair of a committee.

Both interviewees and those who completed the survey were asked to describe how the minority teacher recruitment program benefited them in their career. The overwhelming comment centered on support given them by the program staff such as information, insight, contact and cutting red tape. Encouragement was given when needed was also mentioned. Generally, the program staff made a real difference for all of them. Several stated that advice given them was valuable for success in certain university classes. Support in getting a job after graduation was high on the list of benefits.

They commented on how the program staff provided a place for them to communicate with people who would understand their needs and had their best interest in mind. The staff was credited with providing continued focus and expectations for them. Teachers commented on the counseling which they felt they were not able to get from anyone else on campus. They also commented on the personal involvement provided by the staff that was needed for a minority student.

DISCUSSION

This study raised several issues regarding the shortage of minority teachers and the eventual shortage of African American school administrators. The invaluable presence of African Americans as educational leaders is crucial for students, teachers, and the community. While we can not generalize from this study for all African Americans, we can say for sure that participants in this study are not receiving the attention or recognition by universities or

school districts in the area of educational administration. The participants in this survey they were not recruited, they are not made aware of educational administration preparation programs, and they are not being mentored.

Changing demographics in this country and the public school systems seems not to have given cause to school districts or universities to recognize that ethnic minority students need to have culturally diverse teachers and administrators. Scattered programs will make a difference in a few areas, but nationwide, the country is in serious trouble.

It occurred to us that the participants of MTRP may be interested in efforts which would assist them toward leadership positions. This is a special group of teachers who were recruited and are now teaching. The support provided to them through the minority teacher recruitment program would be just as valuable for them and others pursuing educational administration. A special support effort for recruiting, retaining, etc., minority candidates for administration could be modeled after the Minority Teacher Recruitment Project.

IMPLICATIONS

What then are the major implications of this study? A major implication focuses on equal access to the opportunity and the information and a second, yet to become a reality, is equal access to the attainment of the position. Specifically, recruitment to a program and the possession of the skills needed to advance means very little if the position is not attainable because of hidden barriers, attitudes, and values held by the power brokers of the educational institution.

This study also implies that minority teacher recruitment programs do support and provide services that encourage African Americans interested in pursuing teaching. Participants in this study, comment that the minority teacher recruitment program was very important to them in many ways. The services used most frequently by participants in the minority teacher recruitment program (advising and career counseling) would be useful components of a program for African American teachers interested in educational leadership.

School districts and universities must connect the fact that a shortage of African American teachers will eventually lead to a shortage of African American administrators. School officials and university people will need to approach and talk to African American teachers about school leadership. Teachers that have experienced the aspects of a minority teacher recruitment program are likely candidates to approach about school administration.

African American teachers should be made aware of any program that will assist them in becoming educational leaders. The program should include collaboration, mentoring, advising, orientation, career counseling, certification requirements and job placement. Collaboration, as described by Thompson (1992), is accomplished by establishing partnerships with districts, schools, colleges and universities to expand the candidate pool. Providing a support base is very important once a person is in a leadership position therefore mentoring is central to especially the first year administrator but crucial to the female or minority administrators (Swoboda & Miller, 1986). Brochures and frequent notices should be addressed to them specifically to encourage them to think about

administration. African American teachers that are particularly active on committees and who serve as chairpersons should be contacted about educational administration. The issue of the value of having a culturally and racially diverse administrative team by educational institutions is still an issue. Action on the part of educational institutions to recruit African Americans in particular to leadership positions is the only real demonstrator that diversity is valued.

The major implication of this study is that there is now and will continue to be a shortage of African American administrators as long as there is a shortage of African American teachers. This situation is further exacerbated by institutional and attitudinal barriers which limit their movement and success to educational leadership positions. School districts, collaborating with universities, state departments of education and professional administrator organizations must address this issue pronto.

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